crores have been completed. Most of the schemes for interception and diversion of waste water presently flowing into the river are expected to be completed by the end of the Seventh Five Year Plan. The qualitative improvement in the river can be asssessed only after the works are completed.

(b) The objective of the Ganga Action Plan is to improve the river water quality to make it fit for bathing.

(c) Till 31st October, 1988 an amount of Rs. 100.40 crores has been spent by the Government.

Fraud Detected in the General Insurance Corporation

852. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOUDHURY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the 'BLITZ' of the 29th October, 1988 to the effect that a massive fraud pertaining to the smooth syphoning off of crores of rupees from the four nationalised subsidiaries of the General Insurance Corporation, *viz.* United India, New India, National and Oriental, has been unearthed in Bombay by an ace insurance surveyor;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and whether any arrests have been made in this connection; and

(c) whether any inquiry has since been conducted into the matter and if so, with what results?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) (a) to (c) Government have seen a press news item which appears in the Blitz of 29th October, 1988, about alleged massive fraud resulting in the settlement of claims relating to stolen vehicles. Since the subject matter of the report refers to the role of the Regional Transport Authority, Bombay and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, General Insurance Corporation of India, which is the holding company of four subsidiary insurance companies, namely, National Insurance Co. Ltd., New India Assurance Co. Ltd., Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd. and United India Insurance Co. Ltd. have referred the matter to the State police for investigation. They have advised their companies to collect details of total loss claims paid on stolen vehicles in Bombay since 1984. They are also taking necessary steps to make possible recoveries, against claims settled on these stolen vehicles.

Impact of air Pollution on Forest trees

853. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOUDHURY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Indian Express of the 28th October, 1988 to the effect that air pollution is contributing to the decline and ultimate destruction of forest trees;

(b) if so, what is the estimated loss of trees in the country during the last three years, year-wise as a result thereof; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to save the forests from air pollution?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No estimate of the loss of trees in the forests dur to air pollution is available.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to save the forests from air pollution include:

(i) Guidelines for siting of industries have been evolved.

(ii) Emission standards have been specified for major air polluting industries.

(iii) Consents are required to be taken under the Air (Prevention

and Control of Pollution) Act 1981, as amended in 1987, before setting up of industries.

(iv) Industries have been directed to install pollution control equipment within the specified time schedule as per consent orders issued by the Pollution Control Boards.

(v) A network of ambient air quality monitoring stations has been set up.

(vi) Legal action is taken against the defaulting units.

Sxcise duty refund claims of M/s. Nirma chemical works, Gujarat

854. SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1689 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 9th August, 1989 and state the details of refund claims of excise duty of M|s. Nirma Chemical Works, Gujarat for the calendar years 1980 to 1985?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): During the calender years 1980 to 85, only one refnd claim has been filed by Nirma Chemical Works Ltd, Gujarat. The details thereof are as under:—

Date of filing the claim	Amount claimed in Rs.	Action taken
16-10-85	3,28,125	Amount of Rs. 2,75,459 has been sanctioned on 6-4-87.

Premium on new five hundred rupee currency notes

855. SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the recent press report to the effect that the new five hundred rupee currency notes are available at a premium; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) and (b) Fifty lakh pieces of Rupees five hundred denomination notes were issued to Reserve Bank of India for putting into circulation from October, 1987. Shortage has developed owing to constraints in the printing of fresh notes. Higher incentive payments have been offered to the workers in order to facilitate faster printing of these notes.

Investment by non-resident Indians

856. SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Maharashtra Chief Minister recently went abroad to meet Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to canvas to invest in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, whether the Central Government are aware of the details of the commitments, proposals and interest shown by the Non-Resident Indians;

(c) whether Goverment propose to allow NRIs to invest in India in real estate, land development and acquisition of houses;

(d) whether the Central Government propose to follow-up these matters and assist the State Government; and

(e) if so, what extent and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) At present, investment by Non-Resident Indains is not permitted in real estate and land-based activities on commercial basis.

(d) and (e) Does not arise.